

**Washington, D.C.** - Congresswoman Melissa Bean (IL-08) recently joined her colleagues to introduce HR 5487, *The Veterans ID Theft Protection Act*, which would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide six-months of free credit monitoring for the millions of veterans whose personal information was stolen from the VA last month.

On May 22, the VA announced that as many as 26.5 million veterans were placed at risk of identity theft after an intruder stole an electronic data file containing their names, birth dates and Social Security numbers from the home of a VA employee.

**“It is a disturbing irony that an agency charged with the proper treatment of the men and women who protected our country itself failed to protect our veterans’ personal information from theft and misuse,” Bean said. “Because of the VA’s error, millions of veterans are now more vulnerable to financial fraud. This bill will help them protect against the potentially devastating crime of identity theft.”**

The VA budget has already been stretched thin to provide the benefits earned by our servicemen and women now returning from Iraq and Afghanistan; so, funding for this important consumer protection will not come at the cost of existing VA accounts. Instead, the bill authorizes additional funding so the VA can provide this credit protection without affecting other veterans’ benefits. HR 5487, *The Veterans ID Theft Protection Act* would:

- Require the VA administration to provide six-months of free credit monitoring to Veterans;
- Authorize up to \$100 million in funding to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide credit monitoring as required; and
- Make certain the VA has all necessary negotiating powers to secure the best possible price for the credit monitoring services.

Bean, a member of the House Committee on Financial Services, has become a leader in Congress on the issue of identity theft. She introduced legislation barring professional tax preparers from exposing customers to ID theft by selling their information to third-parties. She also introduced the *Consumer Data Security and Notification Act* to strengthen federal protections against the collection and sale of personal financial information and require that companies notify consumers when that information is at risk.

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